
**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
MAINE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE MANUAL
Parents as Scholars Program**

LEGAL BASIS: The 118th Legislature authorized the Department to establish a student financial aid program based on need for up to 2000 participants known as the Parents as Scholars Program, (PaS) to aid needy students who have dependent children and who are matriculating in post secondary undergraduate 2-year and 4-year degree-granting education programs. Enrollees in the program are provided with a package of student aid that includes aid for living expenses in an amount equivalent to TANF recipients. A family that ceases to receive aid under this chapter as a result of increased child support or increased hours of, or increased income from, employment is eligible to receive transitional support services. The program must be supported with funds other than federal block grant funds provided under the United States Social Security Act, Title IV-A. The program begins 8/1/97.

GENERAL RULE: Recipient and applicant families who qualify for TANF assistance on or after 6/20/97 may apply to participate in the PaS program instead of TANF. Individuals with marketable bachelor's degrees are ineligible for the Parents as Scholars

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS: Eligibility for and the amount of assistance for PaS is determined in accordance with all the eligibility criteria and procedures used in the TANF program including assignment of child support, with the following exceptions:

1. the PaS family will be exempt from the 60 month time limit for each participating month.
2. Individuals applying to the program must be assessed in accordance with the provisions of the ASPIRE-TANF rules. To the extent that program resources and space permit, enrollment in the program must be granted if the ASPIRE-TANF assessment results in findings as follows:
 - a. the individual does not possess the necessary skills to obtain employment that will enable that individual to support a family at 85% of the median family income in the State for a family of the same size;

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- b. considering potential employment opportunities and local labor market conditions, the postsecondary education sought by the individual will significantly improve the ability of the family to be self-supporting; and
- c. the individual has the aptitude to complete the proposed post secondary program successfully.

PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS: An enrollee must participate in a combination of education, training, study or work-site experience for an average of 20 hours per week in the first 24 months of the program. Aid under this chapter may continue beyond 24 months if the enrollee remains in an educational program and agrees to participate in either of the following options which are the result of Legislative action which becomes effective on September 18, 1999:

- A. Fifteen hours per week of work-site experience in addition to other education, training or study; or
- B. A total of 40 hours of education, training, study or work-site experience.

The Department must present both options to enrollees and permit them to choose either option. For the purpose of this subsection, work-site experience includes, but is not limited to, paid employment, work study, practicums, internships, clinical placements, laboratory or field work directly related to the enrollee's employment goal or any other work activities that, as determined by the Department, will enhance the enrollee's employability in the enrollee's field. In the last semester of the enrollee's educational program, work-site experience may also include resume preparation, employment research, interviews and other activities related to job placement.

The Department must make reasonable adjustments in the participation requirements in this subsection for good cause.

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Good Cause:

For the purpose of this subsection, "good cause" means circumstances in which the required participation would cause the enrollee to seriously compromise academic performance. "Good cause" includes, but is not limited to:

1. a verifiable need to take care of a family member with special needs;
2. a physical or mental health problem, illness, accident, death; or
3. a serious personal or family problem that necessitates reduced participation or time off from education, training or work.

An enrollee receiving aid under this chapter must make satisfactory progress in the enrollee's educational program. Rules defining satisfactory academic progress are found in the ASPIRE-TANF manual. The Department may not disapprove an educational plan based solely on the length of the educational program.